

**STRATEGY  
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**WARRIORS TO BUREAUCRATS:  
WHY OFFICERS START OUT TO BE SAM DAMON  
AND END UP COURTNEY MASSENGALE**

**BY**

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AS COURTNEY MASSENGALE.**

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## ABSTRACT

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The United States, a large, powerful, industrial nation, has developed an Army of a particular nature and size and has evolved a military bureaucracy to run it. The bureaucracy affects everyone—from the Commander in Chief to the rawest recruit at the company level. The bureaucracy is the frame-of-reference of the entire Army culture.

An unintended effect of the bureaucracy is to stifle development of junior and mid-level leaders who would be the prospects of tomorrow's top Army leaders. Today's senior leaders, who want candor from subordinates, do not get it. They want to give appropriate military advice to their own superiors in National Policy situations of the gravest import, but find the process daunting, threatening and sometimes dangerously ineffective.

The novel Once an Eagle, by Anton Myrer, deals with some of these issues in the context of a dramatic story that ranges from World War I to the War in Vietnam. The novel has found a wide readership in certain military circles. This paper uses the basic themes of the novel as a metaphor to expose needed changes in the U.S. Army leadership environment.

In the novel, Once an Eagle, Sam Damon, the protagonist, advances from Private to Lieutenant General. Along the way, another officer; Damon's nemesis, Courtney Massengale, always several ranks above Damon, confronts him. Massengale is a bureaucrat and a self-promoter, with little regard for people or their well-being. Thus, a situation builds that is all too familiar to many junior and mid-level officers today.

The trend among junior and mid-career officers is away from being leaders (warriors) to being strictly managers (bureaucrats). The average officer wants to be a leader like Sam Damon when he or she enters the Army, but depending on the leadership environment encountered in his or her early years, he or she tends to shift to that of a micromanager (bureaucrat) like Courtney Massengale. In fact, the incentives in the system: acceptance by superiors, early promotion and personal power, push an officer in this direction.

The shift toward an impersonal, bureaucratic leadership style has had a negative effect on unit leadership climates and on the Army's leadership culture. This has negatively impacted morale, performance, retention, readiness and recruiting. Changing the climate in units will result in a like change in the Army's leadership culture and ensure the development of the kinds of leaders who can ably defend the Nation in the 21st Century.



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## PREFACE

"That's what you ought to be. An aide to General Pershing." "Me?" He smiled his slow sad smile. "Tommy I'm a troop commander. I'm not a fancy Dan, full of drawing room charm and classical references and the right word at the right time and all that." "You could learn..." "Maybe. I doubt it." "I'll tell you: I think you're either born with it or you're not.... Like curly hair." Tommy started faintly—she'd just remembered Massengale's opening confession. Was that his divinely bestowed attribute? "You don't think he's learned, then." "Oh, some of it maybe. But not the charm, not the instinctive move toward the politic reply." He paused. "Massengale will never make an enemy and he'll never have a friend."

—Conversation between Sam Damon and his wife Tommy<sup>1</sup>

As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate.... When the best leader's work is done, the people say, "We did it ourselves."

—Robert Townsend, UP THE ORGANIZATION<sup>2</sup>

The United States, a large, powerful, industrial nation, has developed an Army of a particular nature and size and has evolved a military bureaucracy to run it. The bureaucracy affects everyone—from the Commander in Chief to the rawest recruit at the company level. The bureaucracy is the frame-of-reference of the entire Army culture.

An unintended effect of the bureaucracy is to stifle development of junior and middle level leaders who would be the prospects for tomorrow's top Army leaders. Today's senior leaders, who want candor from subordinates, do not get it. They want to give appropriate military advice to their own superiors in National Policy situations of the gravest import, but find the process daunting, threatening and sometimes dangerously ineffective.

The novel Once an Eagle, by Anton Myrer, deals with some of these issues in the context of a dramatic story that ranges from World War I to the War in Vietnam. The novel has found a wide readership in certain military circles. This paper uses the basic themes of the novel as a metaphor to expose needed changes in the U.S. Army leadership environment. The author of this paper also seeks enlightenment from sources as varied as Professor Samuel Huntington's book, The Soldier and the State to Napoleon, U.S. Grant and John M. Vermillion's 1987 essay "The Pillars of Generalship."

In the novel, Once an Eagle, Sam Damon, the protagonist, advances from Private to Lieutenant General. Along the way, another officer, Damon's nemesis, Courtney Massengale, always several ranks above Damon, confronts him. Massengale is a bureaucrat and a self-promoter, with little regard for people or their well-being. Thus, a situation builds that is all too familiar to many mid-level and higher-level officers today.

The trend among junior and mid-career officers today, has shifted away from being leaders (warriors) to being strictly managers (bureaucrats). The average officer wants to be a leader like Sam Damon when he or she enters the Army, but depending on the leadership environment encountered in his or her early years, he or she tends to shift to become a professional manager, more like Courtney Massengale. In fact, the incentives in the system: acceptance by superiors, early promotion and personal power, push an officer in this direction.

This transformation writ large has caused leadership climate problems in units and has led to a pervasive leadership culture problem in today's Army. Climate and culture problems reflect themselves in a drop in unit morale, as reported in numerous surveys and studies. The drop in morale has had a negative effect on retention among officers and enlisted soldiers. Poor morale indirectly reflects itself in an inability to meet recruiting objectives, although recruiting usually lags in the presence of a strong economy. Low morale, high operational tempo (OPTEMPO) and recruiting and retention problems have short and long term impact on the future of the Army.

The purpose of this paper is to change the culture of Army leadership. It will examine the causes of unevenness in Army leadership and propose reforms in order to change the climate at the unit level and over time change the culture, thus reversing the trends in morale and retention and indirectly the trend in recruiting.

The author is not a whistleblower. Soldiers no longer assemble on whistles. This is, however, a bugle call and soldiers do respond to them. It is a call for assembly to fix a nagging problem in the institution. The problem is fixable.

This paper addresses leadership, mainly at the mid and lower-levels (Sergeant First Class to Colonel). There are several reasons for this. First, senior leaders are the products of decades of experience. A paper like this will not change the way many of them think or operate.<sup>3</sup> Second, the author writes about what he knows and has studied. Although senior leaders are visible, the opinions formed of them are often the result of coverage in the Media and the shadows cast by whatever Administration they serve. The picture that emerges is relevant, however, characterization of this officer or that officer as a "Massengale," would be somewhat unfair.

Soldiers never know the true character of their leaders until times of crisis, when greatness emerges or it does not. Every officer and NCO fights a daily battle for his or her own soul; whether to speak up or remain silent, whether to create and innovate or go with what is easy and accepted, whether to support or jettison a subordinate or whether to stand firm on matters of conscience or give in to pressure. For that reason, this work is directed toward the officers and non-commissioned officers who must take the points herein, ponder them, decide their merits and then act. The object, then, is to prevent future Massengales and multiply the Damons.

## WARRIOR OR BUREAUCRATS? WHY OFFICERS WHO START OUT TO BE SAM DAMON END UP AS COURTNEY MASSENGALE.

The Commander in Chief (CINC) stepped out of his vehicle and, followed by members of his Staff, strode to the training site to view the American Division's training. The CINC was singularly unimpressed with the training and the critiques and explanations offered by the Division Commander and Chief of Staff. The CINC publicly chastised the Division Commander and the assembled staff members.

As the Division Commander and staff stood mute, the CINC turned to leave. The insistent voice of a lone Captain (a recently minted "temporary Lieutenant Colonel)," stopped him. The Lieutenant Colonel strode forward, explaining the problems of the training thus far and that he, the Lieutenant Colonel, was responsible for the training and should answer the CINC's questions. The Lieutenant Colonel also stated that the CINC's Headquarters was part of the problem. The CINC turned to leave again, but the Lieutenant Colonel grabbed him by the elbow, restraining him, and continued to explain. At the conclusion of the discussion, the CINC's lips tightened and he departed without another word.<sup>4</sup> Sometime later on, he sent a note to the Division, asking the Lieutenant Colonel to join his Staff. The Lieutenant Colonel did join the CINC's staff. He was a Colonel and the Field Army G3 by the end of the War.

This anecdote did not and could not happen today. The CINC, the Division Commander, the Chief of Staff or any officer in between would have relieved the Lieutenant Colonel instantly. However, these were men of a different character than leaders of today. They were on a real-world mission, and after all, the Lieutenant Colonel spoke the truth, candidly, yet tactfully—and he was right.

The CINC was General John J. Pershing and the Lieutenant Colonel was George C. Marshall. Albeit at different levels, they both were preparing elements of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) to enter World War I.

Some years later, the President of the United States met with his Secretary of the Treasury and another adviser at the White House to discuss the deteriorating world situation. The advisers presented a plan for a massive expansion of both the U.S. Armed Forces and the defense budget. The President was "flippant and cynical"<sup>5</sup> and disapproved their recommendation. After all, the country was not at war. Such a plan would complicate an already dangerous situation. Besides, it was an election year. A mobilization sent warlike signals. Mobilization would disturb the American people and the leaders of other nations, friendly or not.

In desperation, the Secretary of the Treasury asked the President to hear the other man, whose face, by this time, had flushed brick red. The other man asked for three minutes to explain the need for the program. In those three minutes, the course of history changed. Two days later, the President sent this new program, with an even bigger budget increase, to Congress. It passed.<sup>6</sup>

The President was Franklin D. Roosevelt and the adviser was General George C. Marshall, the same Marshall, who as Temporary Lieutenant Colonel Marshall, had addressed General Pershing in France so many years before.

Without anecdote one, where a subordinate can state his or her honest opinions on important matters, without being denigrated, chastised or punished for doing so, there can be no anecdote two. That is, if Lieutenant Colonel Marshall knows the facts and cannot communicate them to General Pershing, or even Colonel Pershing, for that matter, then it is a good possibility that 22 years later General Marshall will fail to communicate the necessary facts and appropriate military advice to President Roosevelt.

When Marshall did what he did or General Edward C. (Shy) Meyer articulated the dismal state of the "Hollow Army"<sup>7</sup> or General John Vessey strongly advocated maintaining ground forces in Korea<sup>8</sup>, they took and held positions which were unpopular with their superiors. In doing so, they showed the absolute essence of leadership: honest, independent, courageous thought and action. And these men were right.

The debate over leadership versus management continues today, as ever. Effective leaders are usually good managers. The reverse is not always true. In the recent book MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE, Taylor and Rosenbach differentiate between management and leadership as follows:

(Management is) a set of functions—planning, organizing and controlling—that can be taught and learned.... Leadership is an influence process. The end result is evaluated in terms of the unit organizational objective. However, leaders work through people.... managers do not necessarily lead, and leaders are not necessarily good managers.<sup>9</sup>

It is possible for good leaders who are not necessarily good managers themselves to find and employ good managers. One of the most notable examples of this is Napoleon, who relied on his highly capable Chief of Staff, Berthier to develop and carry out the details of Napoleon's plans and orders.<sup>10</sup>

The novel, Once an Eagle, by Anton Myrer, has recently surged in popularity in American military circles. Certain senior military leaders cite it as a sort of pocket guide that governs their conduct. This paper uses the basic elements of the novel as a metaphor and a measuring tool to highlight needed changes in the American Army leadership environment.

Sam Damon, the protagonist of the novel Once an Eagle, as Colonel Sean J. Byrne says in his essay "Looking for Sam Damon," is arguably the greatest officer that "never lived."<sup>11</sup> Colonel Byrne characterizes him as:

Not only a combat leader but also an extraordinary operator and planner.... he inspired his subordinates.... although he maintained the highest standards, he was close to his soldiers and subordinate leaders. They knew he was not out for glory.... In today's environment, he would have had great difficulty understanding the concept of being "politically correct."<sup>12</sup>

During World War I, Damon served in France and won the Medal of Honor and a battlefield commission. Wounded twice, he rose to the temporary rank of Major. Soon after the war, he reverted to First Lieutenant and slogged his way through the period from 1918 to 1941, known as the "inter-war years," in a number of troop assignments. At the beginning of World War II, Damon was a Lieutenant Colonel, commanding a battalion in California. Following dazzling combat service during World War II,

where he rose to the rank of Major General, he sat out the Korean War, serving as Commanding General of the Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia. The book closes as the retired Lieutenant General Sam Damon concludes an evaluation of American operations in the mythical country of Khotaine (read Vietnam).

Throughout his career, Damon confronted his nemesis, Courtney Massengale, an officer from a city in the Northeast. Massengale earned his spurs as a staff officer. Throughout the book, Massengale was always a rank or two above to Damon. At one point, Massengale tried to include Damon in his circle of sycophants. Damon refused this advance, leading Massengale to conclude that Damon was too close to his men and too sentimental to be of any use to him.<sup>13</sup>

The turbulent relationship between the two men came to a head when Damon commanded his Division under his newly assigned Corps Commander, Massengale. Their interaction erupted in expected conflict. Damon had to execute a plan in which he had no faith and yet, due to his indomitable will, expertise and on-scene leadership, his Division emerged victorious, in spite of great losses. At one point in the battle, the Japanese almost overran Damon and his Division after Massengale failed to commit a verbally promised reserve.

Once an Eagle begins with this quote:

So in the Libyan fable it is told, once an eagle, stricken with a dart, said, when he saw the fashion of the shaft, "With our own feathers, not by others hands, are we now smitten."<sup>14</sup>

The meaning is clear; "we are often our own worst enemy."

## WHY A BUREAUCRACY?

What this really means is that the bureaucratic structure doesn't encourage risk-taking, it doesn't encourage chaos, which so many organizations have to live with. It doesn't encourage leaders who shake up the system, who make waves, who will rock the boat. Most bureaucracies like reasonable, adaptive, malleable, docile people.<sup>15</sup>

Professor Samuel Huntington writes that the job of the officer is to be expert in the "management of violence."<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to imagine malleable people managing violence—not to mention leading violent people effectively in war or the confusing environment of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW).

The trend among junior and mid-career officers is away from being leaders (warriors) to being managers (bureaucrats). The average officer wants to be like Sam Damon when he or she enters the Army, but depending on the leadership environment encountered, he or she tends to shift to become more like Courtney Massengale. Not surprisingly, in peacetime, like Massengale, this type of officer can become extremely successful. Too often, the warrior leaders are gone at the time of the next emergency, the troops suffer as a result, and the opening engagement is costly and embarrassing.

The late British Major General John Frederick Charles (J.F.C.) Fuller stated the problem well:

The Archduke Albert puts his finger on it when he says: "There are plenty of small minded men who, in time of peace, excel in detail, are inexorable in matters of equipment and drill, and perpetually interfere with the work of their subordinates. They thus acquire

an unmerited reputation, and render the service a burden, but they above all do mischief in preventing development of individuality, and in retarding the advancement of independent and capable spirits. When war arises the small minds, worn out by attention to trifles, are incapable of effort, and fail miserably. So goes the world.<sup>17</sup>

The author of this paper contends that the shift toward an impersonal, bureaucratic leadership style has negatively impacted morale, performance, retention, readiness and recruiting. To alleviate these effects, the Army's leadership process must be redesigned, beginning at the company-level. Change the climate in units, and, with support from the top, this will result in a like change in the Army's leadership culture.

## THE PROBLEMS.

### PROBLEM 1. LACK OF EFFECTIVE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION.

This problem is the most pressing since without it, leaders only transmit, they do not exchange with their subordinates. This erodes trust and initiative. It also reduces the leader's ability to get the truth, to know what is going on.

Warren Bennis says:

Effective leaders reward dissent, as well as encourage it. They understand that whatever momentary discomfort they experience as a result of being told from time to time that they are wrong is more than offset by the fact that reflective backtalk increases a leader's ability to make good decisions.... **Perhaps the ultimate irony is that the follower who is willing to speak out shows precisely the kind of initiative that leadership is made of.**<sup>18</sup>

The ability to voice well-reasoned dissent, even when it was unpopular, was what defined Generals Marshall, Meyer and Vessey. When an NCO, Damon dealt with the matter of two-way communication this way:

"But Sarge, ...just supposing all hell's broke loose, as you say, and the officer forgets the command, or he goes loose in the lid?" Damon let his eyes rove slowly around the room. Very solidly and distinctly he said: "Why, then obviously the thing to do is tell that officer he's a ... fool and that you want to go back and do it all over again."<sup>19</sup>

General Matthew B. Ridgway also discussed the matter:

To me such incidents most frequently found in war are those where the career of a leader is at stake, and where his actions or decisions will determine the saving or slaughter of many of his men.... The lure of glory, the fear of being thought afraid, of losing personal power and prestige, the mistaken idea that blind obedience to orders has no alternative—all have been followed by tragic losses of lives with little or no gain. General George C. Marshall, one of the noblest men who has worn an American uniform since Washington, once said of decisions of this kind: "**It is hard to get men to do this, for this is when you lay your career, perhaps your commission on the line.**"<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, the Massengales view dissent (sometimes subordinates simply requesting clarification) as disloyalty, even disobedience. There is no discussion of alternatives, even before the decision. It can

lead to major error, even disaster. Lieutenant General Massengale and Major General Damon had such a discussion:

(Damon said) "If you order this movement I will execute it to the best of my ability. But I'll tell you one thing—you won't find anybody in the Southwest Pacific Theater of War who can carry out orders he doesn't approve of as well as I can. I think you know that, too." <sup>21</sup>

Oddly, Massengale agreed.

#### **SOLUTION 1. REINFORCE EFFECTIVE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION.**

Building effective two-way communication requires the utmost in commitment from the Army's senior leadership. In order to reinforce two-way communication, superiors must begin the process. Leaders must learn to listen and understand that by capturing the thoughts and ideas of subordinates, they get a truer picture of what is really going on and they ensure the maximum creative input to their own ideas. The habits of communication on the parts of both superior and subordinate must develop during training and other exchanges in peacetime, before deploying on operations. Bottom line: soldiers perform better when they know the reasons why they must do things and have had the opportunity to participate in their own destiny as Major Sam Damon heard from Lin Tso Han, the Communist Chinese Guerrilla leader.

"When you ask men to die, to endure great hardship, they have the right to know the purpose that demands that sacrifice.... They have the right to be treated like men—with all honor due them—all honor due their inextinguishable souls."<sup>22</sup>

#### **PROBLEM 2. COMMANDERS ARE CONSUMED BY MANAGEMENT DETAILS.**

"You yourself said it was the system."... "I'm not defending everything in the system," he said. "I certainly hope not." "There's plenty wrong with it. Plenty. If I'm ordered to abide by some regulation I'll do it; but if I'm given any latitude I'm going to go my own way. I go by what I think is right."

—Sam Damon<sup>23</sup>

An organization does well only those things a commander checks or causes to be checked.

—General Bruce C. Clarke<sup>24</sup>

What gets measured gets done.

—Tom Peters<sup>25</sup>

Few commanders today would admit to having even a modest amount of spare time. Commanders are so deep in organizational logistic and personnel details that they have little time remaining to command.

#### **SOLUTION 2A. REDUCE THE REPORTS AND BRIEFINGS COMMANDERS ARE REQUIRED TO GIVE AND RECEIVE.**

In order to free up time and concentrate on what is important, Tom Peters suggests that leaders ensure the right work be done by the right people.<sup>26</sup> Many of the management details covered in the

memoranda and the innumerable PowerPoint briefings that go hand in hand with them require tracking—but not by commanders. Remember, General Clarke did say "or causes to be checked."

## **SOLUTION 2B. CREATE A NEW POSITION, DEPUTY COMMANDER, IN BATTALION AND BRIGADE LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS.**

At present, only separate brigades and regiments have a deputy commanding officer. However, today, battalion and brigade-level organizations deploy separately to Bosnia and other places, supporting increasingly complex operations such as forming Joint Task Forces (JTFs) or Service Components of a JTF. Thus, battalions and brigades need the same leadership team as separate brigades.

In garrison, the deputy commanding officer would serve as the "deputy commanding officer for support" and would be responsible for the details removed from the commander's plate. The executive officer or chief of staff would continue to run the staffs. Deputy commanders would rate and senior rate certain officers and NCOs in units in order to lighten the commander's load.

## **PROBLEM 3. LEADERSHIP STYLE.**

Bennis and Townsend describe the old style of leadership:

The anachronism is the person who in effect says to his organization, "I order all of you insignificant little people to come to work excited, energetic, and creative and to accomplish impossible tasks... By the way, I want you to park in the outer lot and slog through the snow past the empty parking space with my name on it, and I also want you to pay for your coffee while I get mine free, served on fine china." That was the old model,<sup>27</sup> and it worked.... But now we're a long way past that.

Several military analogs to this are left to the imagination. Once leaders have more time, the time must be put to good use. The best use is training and mentoring subordinates, the most effective way to achieve commonality of purpose and understanding of the commanders' intent. Personal contact results in an exchange, generally more beneficial to the subordinate. Eventually it results in a more valid performance evaluation.

Taylor and Rosenbach observe:

There is no effective leadership without trust. Leaders are dependent upon trust as a bond between them and their followers. Leaders must demonstrate their trust in followers through delegation and empowerment.... At the same time, followers depend upon the leader to be trustworthy— honest, consistent, equitable, and humane. Of all the modern organizations, none is so dependent on the bonds of trust as the military.<sup>28</sup>

A common perception held by mid and junior-level officers and NCOs today is that superiors do not trust their subordinates, and so, superiors micromanage mundane details. They restrict the freedom of their subordinates in order to avoid incidents. This has a dramatic effect on missions when, as in Haiti or Bosnia, American soldiers, arguably the most gregarious in the world and the best outfitted for the environment of peacekeeping, are forced to stay on their bases, aware that force protection has become the mission. Thus, they cannot employ these character traits in the business of meeting people,

developing consensus and moving fragmented nations towards the desired end state. Yet, leaders expect these soldiers to "jump the fence,"<sup>29</sup> and engage in combat at a moment's notice.

The lack of trust downward occurs because of a lack of "tolerance for error." The lack of trust upward causes "risk aversion." Concerning two-way trust, Warren Bennis, who studied 90 leaders of world-class organizations for a period for six years, found that they all had mastered the art of learning through mistakes and allowed subordinates to do so as well.<sup>30</sup>

During World War I, Sergeant Damon dealt with subordinates' mistakes in ways that built trust:

"Asleep on outpost duty, Asleep on -- You know what you could get, don't you." (Said Damon).... "Sarge, it won't happen again...." "No. I it won't. It sure as hell won't.... All right, I'm going to give you one more chance, Raebyrne. I'm going to let you off."..."I'm going to keep this between you and me and God Almighty."<sup>31</sup>

Damon granted Private Raebyrne a reprieve for one of the most grievous errors, sleeping on guard duty in a combat zone. Damon gave Raebyrne another chance and cemented his relationship with Raebyrne, but also with every other unit Damon led in World War I. Damon's subordinates trusted him. They believed in him; and would not let him down again.

To be sure, certain conduct must be discouraged. However, leaders must learn to underwrite honest mistakes. They have to fly "top cover" for deserving subordinates. Today, many leaders use mistakes as ways to differentiate between subordinates for the purpose of evaluation. Officers have reported that their OER counseling simply consisted of a recounting of each mistake they had made during the period.<sup>32</sup> "Gotcha! Counseling."

The erosion of trust has caused an exodus of talented people from the Army. Subordinates vote with their feet. When they leave the Army, they turn off uncounted others they meet.

### **SOLUTION 3. RESTORE TRUST: GET RID OF THE OLD STYLE AND EMPLOY TRANSACTIONAL AND/OR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP METHODS.**

In order to build trust and make the Army an organization young people want to join, Army leaders can and should consider employing transactional and transformational leadership methods.

Transactional leadership offers incentives for appropriate behavior and disincentives for inappropriate behavior. Personal contact between subordinate and superior may be the most valuable and cheapest incentive.

The exception I witnessed myself, a divisional commander in the picket line with his men and everyone confident and smiling. He was doing nothing outside showing himself, yet his presence acted like a charm—it maintained confidence. He was a man who knew the value of moral cement.<sup>33</sup>

Transformational leadership develops a challenging vision, which may involve a course correction or a new, demanding mission, and gets the subordinates to commit to that vision. The end-result is that both the individuals and the team or unit improve. Sergeant Sam Damon was a transformational leader, although he had not heard the term.<sup>34</sup>

#### **PROBLEM 4. LACK OF MENTORING/POOR LEADERSHIP CLIMATE.**

The (CSIS) Study found an increase in micromanagement and a "zero defects" attitude that is fed by the availability of the Internet and e-mail. "An awful lot of modern technology is aiding and abetting oversupervision and micromanagement." Many service members say that impersonal "command by e-mail" is becoming the norm.<sup>35</sup>

Many commanders today run what appears to be a "turkey race,"<sup>36</sup> commanding by email and simply watching the results and picking their favorites among their officers. In the meantime, junior officers receive little or no personal contact. The unfortunate development is that the computer, potentially a work-saving device, has become a major consumer of time.

Commanders need every organization in their unit to be a good one. If they go to war, they go as a team, with three or four subordinate companies, battalions, platoons, or brigades. If they pick, spend time with and show favoritism toward a unit or officer, then the other officers and units suffer and lag behind. Those officers and units must fend for themselves and succeed in spite of, rather than because of, their commanders.

#### **SOLUTION 4A. CHECK THE MENTORING PROGRAM AND UNIT CLIMATE.**

In order to provide depth in the officer selection process, the author proposes a "three lens, 360 degree look" at an officer. As the first lens, check the mentoring and climate in a unit. To do this, provide a certain percentage of subordinate officers a chance to rate their mentoring. This would be part of a random mentoring survey and need not encompass 100 percent of the officers. The mentoring survey would be done at least twice per year. It would be sent to officers, after OERs, by an independent organization at least three levels above the unit commander.

Once it becomes clear that a particular commander is not spending time with his or her people or mentoring or counseling them, then, the rater and senior rater would be required to consider this in their evaluations and address it with the unit commander.

A second survey would check the overall leadership climate in the unit twice during a command tour. Send this one to a certain percentage of all ranks.

Create a "leadership file," (proposed new addition to the board file) and place data from the climate and mentoring surveys in it. Board members would compare survey data from soldiers and subordinate leaders to the OERs and other items in an officer's file. Board members would be better able to discern how many of the OERs in an officer's file were simply "boilerplate" constructed by commanders who didn't really know their people or who were attempting to "stack the deck." Both the rater and senior rater would monitor this data.

#### **SOLUTION 4B. INSTITUTE PROFESSIONAL MENTORS.**

In the Army's current system, it is "up or out," based on a belief that officers must continue to advance in rank to be effective. This results in short tours in units, high turbulence and a lack of mentoring of and by the officer. To reduce this trend, the author recommends instituting a system of professional mentors.

This would involve officers at Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel at minimum who would determine that they would remain in the same grade.

In addition, allow officers retired from active duty to serve in reserve component units, still drawing their retirement pay plus reserve component pay. Also, allow officers electing this "professional mentor" program in either the Active or Reserve Component to serve up to two grades down in rank in order to participate in some form of special duty such as that in Special Operations, Military Intelligence and Aviation units.

The professional mentorship program would infuse experience and a new level of mentoring in all active and reserve component units. These officers would serve as a reference point for those who passed through the units on their way to other promotions and assignments. They would also provide a benchmark voice for unit commanders.

#### **PROBLEM 5. INEFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.**

Leadership development programs are often haphazard and ineffective.

#### **SOLUTION 5. DEVELOP A CENTRALIZED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR OFFICERS.**

Professional development training of officers is one important way to move back along the path to leadership, to a wider understanding and practice of the Army Values.<sup>37</sup> To focus professional development on inculcation of Army Values and improve mentoring, the Army should adopt a centralized professional development program.

Using outside (outside the Army), professional developmental expertise (Hollywood/Silicon Valley), the Army would develop, a series of six interactive, multimedia, multidimensional professional development "kits" per year. This would amount to one kit for every other month in a given year. Successive kits would be produced each year. These kits would be usable from battalion to corps-level.

An example of such a professional development session kit at battalion level would be a videotape, such as "Gettysburg," plus a multi-media, multidimensional, interactive, computerized simulation and briefing system, that would allow the essence of a virtual "Staff Ride" to be done in the unit headquarters or any designated area. Initially, use "off the shelf" videotapes and develop special ones later.

Leaders would watch the video in its entirety. The multimedia package would consist of a series of vignettes drawn from the movie, complete with maps and video clips. Officers would be assigned to portray characters in the scenario. Each officer would develop his or her character, produce a short briefing and paper and cover the relevant aspects of issues according to instructions in the package.

These training packages would allow leaders to tailor them, coach, and mentor their officers to prepare for and cope with paradox, future operations, chaos and ethical dilemmas. This program would also provide commanders with a written and orally delivered product, submitted by each officer. The officer's first line supervisor would prepare an evaluation of the officer's participation and forward it to the officer's "academic file (proposed-see below)." Through this process, commanders would evaluate a new

dimension of their officers and would develop a more objective picture of each officer, thus lessening the tendency towards, and perception of, favoritism.

#### **PROBLEM 6. INFREQUENT OFFICER EDUCATION.**

Every "profession" involves regular professional education, according to Professor Huntington.<sup>38</sup> An officer attends the Branch Basic Course soon after entry into the Army, the Advanced Course within five or six years, and, with luck, CAS3 and Command and General Staff College within ten years of the Advanced Course. Attendance at the War College takes place ten years later. Given the rate of change, much can happen in eight to ten years. Because of selection requirements for CGSC and the War College, many officers never receive additional education after the Branch Advanced Course and CAS3.

#### **SOLUTION 6. GIVEN THE COMPLEXITY OF THE MODERN POLITICO-MILITARY SYSTEM, DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF CONTINUING EDUCATION TO EDUCATE, DEVELOP AND ASSESS ALL OFFICERS.**

The system of continuing education would include distributed learning opportunities for all officers. It would be mandatory, every two years. Officers would enter the learning environment through video teleconferencing, multimedia interactive computer exchange or attendance at a hard classroom facility or alternate location. Educational periods should last at least 40 classroom hours and include a psychological evaluation.

During such instruction, attendees would receive updates on doctrine, ongoing operations (so that "Lessons Learned" are not simply "Lessons Listed"), impending operations, political-military trends in the environment and other subjects as required. Students would take a test and present a written and an oral product. Forward input from continuing education to the individual's "academic file" (proposed). The idea here is to generate information to assess the creativity, response to paradox, aptitude and suitability for certain positions and intellectual makeup of the officer.

Make the "academic file" (proposed); the educational information gathered on individuals from unit professional development sessions, continuing education, published articles and service school attendance. This file would constitute the second lens of the "360 degree look."

#### **PROBLEM 7. THE EVALUATION PROCESS LACKS OBJECTIVITY AND DEPTH.**

Army regulations require certain actions of the rater and senior rater in the evaluation process, but since the evaluation process is not checked, it is not done right. Officers at the Army War College reported receiving OERs in the mail three months after leaving command. Some officers have not received theirs yet, eight months after the course began. These officers also report that there were many opportunities for the rater and senior rater to have presented the report earlier.

#### **SOLUTION 7. CHANGE THE EVALUATION PROCESS: GATHER THE TOOLS AND CREATE A "360 DEGREE LOOK" AT AN OFFICER.**

This lack of contact in the evaluation process invalidates the system. Since the OER is the most important (and only) tool currently used in board selection, the Army has evolved a form of unit and

Branch nepotism. Before the centralized promotion system, nepotism was Army-wide. The Army was smaller; most people at higher levels knew each other and many of the same subordinates and the seniority system protected discourse to an extent. Now nepotism is unit or branch-specific and is propagated by unscrupulous or busy commanders who do not spend time with their subordinate leaders, and as a result, structure their OERs based on favoritism or comfort level with an officer. This produces successful officers (fast movers) who are simply carbon copies of their bosses. A personality conflict or misstep ruins a career. This ultimately leads to "yes men and women" who succeed, and independent men and women who fail. The experience of General John Galvin, among others, is instructive as to why one bad experience should not halt a career.<sup>39</sup>

The OER, originally thought to be the solution to merit-based selection, must be reduced in relative effect, in regards to selection for promotion and command. In addition to the leadership and education files, described above, the number of OERs during leadership tours should be increased from the minimum of two to a minimum of four, in other words, one every six months if no changes occur involving the rater, rated officer or senior rater. In addition, officers deploying on missions for two months should receive a change of rater report and would receive a rating from the chain of command they work for in-Theater or at the alternate location.

Consider the file of accumulated OERs to be only the third lens of a three-lens, 360 degree-look at an officer. With the addition of the "leadership" and "educational" files (described above), a board gets a deeper look into the character of an officer. In addition, more OERs, covering shorter periods, would be available for review. A more complete picture of an officer emerges.<sup>40</sup>

The mandatory 1/3 - 2/3 rule (up to 49%) in the top block makes little sense in light of the fact that commanders are not developing their subordinates. Many officers believe that the 1/3 - 2/3 requirement discourages contact between officers and their senior raters. "Why invest the time when you know you'll have to crush him or her?"<sup>41</sup> Many officers believe that once "top-blocked," an officer's career is "made" from Captain through CGSC, Battalion Command and beyond.<sup>4243</sup>

The announced purpose of the new OER was to restore honesty to the system and give boards an easier job. Since the new report results in less contact, what did it accomplish other than to improve counting beans and peddling flesh at the expense of leading? Signing all the required papers in the affirmative when the required counseling has not been performed is not honest. Second, why should boards have an easier job? If commanders had more time, due to a reduction in the bureaucratic demands on their time, spending a few more days on a board to review additional objective rating information would ensure they picked the best people instead of just the ones served up like the "Blue Plate Special"<sup>44</sup> by the previous chain of command.

Deputy commanders completing OERs on certain officers (Rater for some and Senior Rater for others) can reduce commanders' OER workloads, even in light of the increased number of OERs. To reduce the number of files going before a command board, the Army should require an individual to apply for command.<sup>45</sup> This would reduce the number of files coming before a board by an estimated 30-50%<sup>46</sup>.

Not all Lieutenant Colonels or Colonels want to command. Given an increased number of OERS and inclusion of educational and leadership files, reducing the number of files that come before a Command Board allows Board members to concentrate on each file, leading to better selections. Promotion boards would continue to consider all eligible officers, the way they do today.

## **CONCLUSION.**

Sergeant Sam Damon or General Sam Damon would be out of place today. Damon's habits of candor, integrity and "doing what was right" made him a maverick in his own time. Today he might not make Major. Lieutenant Colonel would be a stretch.

Warren Bennis says that unactivated, world-class leaders are "out there" in all facets of society.<sup>47</sup> The Sam Damons, George Marshalls, Douglas MacArthurs and George Pattons are "out there." "Out there" may mean in the Army, but not necessarily so. Regardless, the Army's task is to attract such people to join and then identify, activate, develop and promote them. This process will not be easy, because they are not always easy to spot. Some take extra effort, time, and patience to develop. S.L.A. Marshall wrote:

General Grant signally failed to organize his life as an individual before a turn of the wheel gave him his chance to organize the military power of the United States in war.

General Sherman, who commanded the Army for almost 15 years, was considered by many of his close friends to be a fit subject for confinement as a mental case just before the Civil War.<sup>48</sup>

The character and personality traits these men exhibited would have eliminated them in the present day. Interestingly, both had left the service in their day, before the ultimate call came. How can the rough-edged Grants and Shermans be found and protected until they are needed again?

The seven problems and nine solutions identified herein provide the foundation for an effort to curtail the growth of bureaucratic culture and thus create the conditions for resurgence of positive leadership climate at the unit level. If the current leadership culture was conducive to the promotion of individuality, zeal and creativity, some officers, even those in senior leadership positions, would be quite different officers, either the same officers of quite a different character, (leading, not micromanaging), or different officers would hold the positions. Those who have "made rank" because of their ability to "play the system" will resist any effort at reform. They must be converted or bypassed.

Converting some will be difficult....

(Massengale) felt, for one slow heartbeat, the rush of desire for a life free of sycophancy and manipulation and scheming; free of the worry, the tireless approaches, the disappointments and the strain of bringing timid or stupid or downright hostile people around to seeing things the way you saw them ... Then it passed, as lightly as a cloud slipping across the sun, and he smiled and said: "But then who'd do the world's work, darling girl?"

—————Massengale to Damon's wife, Tommy.<sup>49</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Anton Myrer, Once an Eagle (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 1996), 306.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Bennis, The Unconscious Conspiracy: Why Leaders Can't Lead (New York, New York: The American Management Association, 1976), 177.

<sup>3</sup> "As proximate causes of the persistent problem of erratic, uneven leadership, there are three possibilities. One is that we have a perennial crop of colonels and generals who really don't care about creating organizational climates that focus on combat readiness and the long-term development of an officer corps in which candor, courage, competence and commitment abound.... The second possibility is that our senior leadership, while mostly solid, has a good quantity of well-intentioned, non-leaders who cannot—by virtue of their personality, limited capacity for trust, lack of self-confidence or improper definition of success—perform at the executive level. This seems to be confirmed by Army-wide surveys.... Yet a third possible source of unhealthy or deteriorating command climates is simply the lack of finely honed skills among senior officers in diagnosing, creating and maintaining the necessary climate for sustained excellence." Walter F. Ulmer "The Army's New Senior Leadership Doctrine." Parameters (December 1987): 12-13. LTG Ulmer echoes these concerns in the Spring 1998 issue of Parameters, as well. Walter F Ulmer "Military Leadership into the 21st Century: Another Bridge too Far?" Parameters (Spring 1998): 4-25.

<sup>4</sup> Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall: Education of a General (New York, New York: The Viking Press, 1963), 152.

<sup>5</sup> Leonard Mosley, Marshall Hero for Our Times (New York, New York: Hearst Books, 1982), 137-138.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> General Meyer laid his career on the line and stunned the Carter Administration by telling President Carter that the country had a "Hollow Army." Secretary of the Army Clifford Alexander asked General Meyer to retract the comment. Meyer politely refused, offering his resignation, and the comment stood. James Kitfield, The Prodigal Soldiers. (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 199-203.

<sup>8</sup> General Vessey, as commander of U.S. Forces in Korea in 1977, "publicly opposed President Carter's announced intention to withdraw combat forces from South Korea...." This act was widely thought to have cost General Vessey the job as Chief of Staff of the Army. General Meyer was appointed Chief of Staff instead, but in characteristic Meyer style, General Meyer asked General Vessey to be his Vice Chief of Staff. General Vessey ultimately became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Reagan Administration. James Kitfield, The Prodigal Soldiers. (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 204).

<sup>9</sup> Robert L.Taylor and William E. Rosenbach, Military Leadership in Pursuit of Excellence (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 206.

<sup>10</sup> John M. Vermillion "The Pillars of Generalship." Parameters (Summer 1987): 5.

<sup>11</sup> Sean M. Byrne, "Looking For Sam Damon." Military Review (May-June 1998): 53.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 54-56.

<sup>13</sup> "Yes—you're a Regular Army officer, you're not a 30-year NCO mothering your brood, kissing some and kicking others. You were one once, briefly. But you're not now. Look, it's all right to be a maverick if you want to be, a bit of an eccentric—maybe all great leaders have had a little of that from Joshua on down. But you shouldn't be known for one. That's just sentimental—and destructive." Anton Myrer, Once an Eagle (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 1996), 379.

<sup>14</sup> Attributed to Aeschylus. Anton Myrer, Once an Eagle (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 1996), xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Warren Bennis and Robert Townsend, Reinventing Leadership (New York, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1995), 95.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957, renewed 1985), 11.

<sup>17</sup> John Frederick Charles (J.F.C.) Fuller, Generalship, Its Diseases and Their Cure (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Military Service Publishing Company, 1936), 32-33.

<sup>18</sup> Warren Bennis, "Followers Make Good Leaders Good," in Military Leadership in Pursuit of Excellence, ed. Robert L. Taylor and William E. Rosenbach, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 160-162.

<sup>19</sup> Anton Myrer, Once an Eagle (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 1996), 60.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew B. Ridgway, "Leadership," in Military Leadership in Pursuit of Excellence, ed. Robert L. Taylor and William E. Rosenbach, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 111-113.

<sup>21</sup> Anton Myrer, Once an Eagle (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 1996), 642.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce C. Clarke, Thoughts on Commandership, (Fort Belvoir, Virginia: The Engineer School, 1982), 7.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas J. Peters, Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for Management Revolution. (Excel, 1987. Audiotape).

<sup>26</sup> "Demand that any report to be sent you be reduced to three pages or less. Starting today, seriously consider not sending any memo to anyone for any reason, use the phone, and use personal contact. Also, prune the number of reports that you receive by 50 to 80 percent in the next six to 12 months.... I once, in fact, did a study of several hundred memos in multiple levels in multiple functions in the same organization and over 90 percent of the several hundred were of the "cover your tail" variety.", Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Warren Bennis and Robert Townsend, Reinventing Leadership (New York, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1995), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Robert L. Taylor and William E. Rosenbach, Military Leadership in Pursuit of Excellence (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Term attributed to Brigadier General (Retired) Richard Potter.

<sup>30</sup> "These leaders never took a setback as a failure. They just took it and held it is something from which they could learn.... In fact, one leader said to me, "For me, a mistake is simply another way of doing things." Imagine that, "A mistake is simply another way of doing things." Another one said, "If I have an art form of leadership and I don't think I do, it would be making as many mistakes as I can as quickly as possible, learning from them and getting on with it." Thomas J. Peters, Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for Management Revolution. (Excel, 1987. Audiotape).

<sup>31</sup> Anton Myrer, Once an Eagle (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 1996), 71-72.

<sup>32</sup> This was reported to COL Rendall by roughly one out of three of Majors, Captains, Lieutenants and Warrant Officers counseled during 40 months of Battalion Command.

<sup>33</sup> John Frederick Charles (J.F.C.) Fuller, Generalship, Its Diseases and Their Cure (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Military Service Publishing Company, 1936), 19.

<sup>34</sup> "Linked together they swayed and labored along, their heads sunk in their shoulders, striding in unison although there was no cadence.... They knew the platoon was more than the mere sum of their numbers—they had imbued themselves with this knowledge and made it theirs. They were great, they were magnificent; he was proud to be their leader." Anton Myrer, Once an Eagle (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 1996), 133.

<sup>35</sup> Andrea Stone, "Study finds strain in military." 10 January 2000, available from USA Today. Accessed 10 January 2000.

<sup>36</sup> Author's term for a method of evaluation where a leader envisions all subordinates in the same "box" and watches the ensuing struggle, attempting to pick the winners. No attempt is made to develop all the participants, just the ones that show the most promise.

<sup>37</sup> Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage are the Army Core Values. To compete in a world of chaos, the Army must become a visionary organization. One component of the visionary organization is the core ideology. The core ideology is sum of the core values plus the core purpose. The core ideology must then be learned and ascribed to by everyone in the organization. Collins and Porras say that sometimes organizations have no written core ideology, but in truly visionary organizations, every member knows what it is. The Army must formulate a core ideology. This process need not be a lengthy intellectual exercise. For example, if one were to contemplate a developing a core ideology for the U. S. Marine Corps, "**Semper Fidelis**" might be a good place to start. James C. Collins, and Jerry A. Porras. Built to Last. (New York, New York: HarperCollins, 1997). 8, 54, 67-79.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957, renewed 1985), 7.

<sup>39</sup> James Kitfield, The Prodigal Soldiers. (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 73-74.

<sup>40</sup> Walter F. Ulmer "Military Leadership into the 21st Century: Another Bridge too Far?" Parameters (Spring 1998): 10-11.

<sup>41</sup> Articulated by officers in counseling sessions with the author

<sup>42</sup> Articulated by officers in counseling sessions with the author.

<sup>43</sup> Walter F. Ulmer "Military Leadership into the 21st Century: Another Bridge too Far?" Parameters (Spring 1998): 10.

<sup>44</sup> This is the author's term for the officer "picked" by the current chain of command. Due to the lack contact by rating officials with all officers or of objective ratings, the "pick" is often flawed and reflects how much only the rater feels comfortable with or "likes" the officer. Since the senior rater often does not know and has not observed the rated officer, the rater often writes the senior rater's portion of the OER and recommends the "blocking" of the officer. Developing additional sources of evaluation through the use of a "360 degree look" at an officer will mitigate the effects of this practice.

<sup>45</sup> Attributed to the late Colonel Dandridge M. (Mike) Malone as mentioned by LTG (RET) Walter F. Ulmer in his essay, "Leaders, Managers and Command Climate." Armed Forces Journal International (July 1986): 58. Echoed in Walter F. Ulmer "Military Leadership into the 21st Century: Another Bridge too Far?" Parameters (Spring 1998): 23.

<sup>46</sup> Author's estimate.

<sup>47</sup> "At the time this nation was formed, our population stood at around 3 million. Of that 3 million, we produced, at the very least, six leaders of world-class: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison and Franklin. Today our population stands at about 240 million, so we could expect maybe eighty times as many world-class leaders. That would be 480 Washingtons, Jeffersons and so forth. Where are they? There's an unequivocal answer. They are out there. **Out there in the settings through which we have all traveled and consulted and worked in are the unactivated leaders, feeling no overpowering call to lead and hardly aware of the potential within.**" Warren Bennis, *The Leadership Challenge: Skills for Taking Charge* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Listen USA, 1985. Audiotape).

<sup>48</sup> S. L. A. Marshall, "Leaders and Leadership," in Military Leadership in Pursuit of Excellence, ed. Robert L. Taylor and William E. Rosenbach, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 98.

<sup>49</sup> Anton Myrer, Once an Eagle (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Army War College Foundation Press, 1996), 536.

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